

1 AN ACT concerning veterans.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Veterans' Home Nurses' Loan Repayment Act.

6 Section 5. Nurse Loan Repayment Program. There is created,
7 beginning July 1, 2007, the Nurse Loan Repayment Program to be
8 administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission in
9 consultation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The
10 program shall provide assistance, subject to appropriation, to
11 eligible nurses.

12 Section 10. Award; maximum time period; maximum amount.
13 Subject to appropriation, the Commission shall award a grant to
14 each qualified applicant for a maximum of 4 years. The amount
15 of this grant may not exceed \$5,000 per year. The Commission
16 shall require the recipient of a grant awarded under the
17 program to use the grant award for payment of the recipient's
18 educational loan.

19 Section 15. Application. All applications for grant
20 assistance under the program must be made to the Commission in
21 a form and manner prescribed by the Commission. Applicants

1 shall also submit any supporting documents deemed necessary by
2 the Commission at the time of application.

3 Section 20. Eligibility.

4 (a) The Commission shall, on an annual basis, receive and
5 consider applications for grant assistance under the program.
6 An applicant is eligible for a grant under the program if the
7 Commission finds that the applicant:

8 (1) is a United States citizen or permanent resident;

9 (2) is a resident of Illinois;

10 (3) is working as a registered professional nurse or
11 licensed practical nurse in a State veterans' home;

12 (4) is a borrower with an outstanding balance due on an
13 educational loan; and

14 (5) has not defaulted on an educational loan.

15 (b) Preference may be given to previous recipients of a
16 grant under the program, provided that the recipient continues
17 to meet the eligibility requirements set forth in this Section.

18 (c) A recipient of a grant under the program must fulfill a
19 separate 12-month period as a registered professional nurse or
20 licensed practical nurse in a State veterans' home for each
21 grant that he or she is awarded.

22 Section 900. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is
23 amended by adding Sections 8 and 9 as follows:

1 (20 ILCS 2805/8 new)

2 Sec. 8. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Outpatient
3 Counseling Program. Subject to appropriations for that
4 purpose, the Department, in consultation with the Department of
5 Human Services, shall contract with professional counseling
6 specialists to provide a range of confidential counseling and
7 direct treatment services to war-affected Southwest Asia
8 combat veterans and their family members, and to provide
9 additional treatment services to Viet Nam War veterans for
10 post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly those Viet Nam
11 veterans whose post-traumatic stress disorder has intensified
12 or initially emerged due to the war in the Middle East. In
13 consultation with the Department of Human Services, the
14 Department shall:

15 (1) develop an educational program designed to inform
16 and train primary health care professionals, including
17 mental health professionals, about the effects of
18 war-related stress and trauma;

19 (2) provide informational and counseling services for
20 the purpose of establishing and fostering peer-support
21 networks throughout the State for families of deployed
22 members of the reserves and the Illinois National Guard;
23 and

24 (3) provide for veterans' families a referral network
25 of mental health providers who are skilled in treating
26 deployment stress, combat stress, and post-traumatic

1 stress.

2 As used in this Section, "Southwest Asia combat veteran"
3 means an Illinois resident who is, or who was honorably
4 discharged as, a member of the Armed Forces of the United
5 States, a member of the Illinois National Guard, or a member of
6 any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States
7 and who served on active duty in connection with Operation
8 Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation Iraqi
9 Freedom.

10 (20 ILCS 2805/9 new)

11 Sec. 9. Veterans Conservation Corps. Subject to
12 appropriations for that purpose, the Department shall create a
13 list of honorably discharged veterans, particularly those with
14 post-traumatic stress disorder and related conditions, who are
15 interested in working on a volunteer basis on projects that
16 restore Illinois' natural habitat. The list is referred to as
17 the Veterans Conservation Corps. The Department shall promote
18 the opportunity to volunteer for the Veterans Conservation
19 Corps through its field offices and through cooperating
20 veterans organizations. Only veterans who grant their approval
21 may be included on the list. The Department shall consult with
22 the Department of Natural Resources to determine the most
23 effective way to market the Veterans Conservation Corps to
24 State agencies and local governmental or not-for-profit
25 sponsors of habitat restoration projects.

1 Section 905. The Property Tax Code is amended by changing
2 Section 15-165 and by adding Section 15-167 as follows:

3 (35 ILCS 200/15-165)

4 Sec. 15-165. Disabled veterans. Property up to an assessed
5 value of \$70,000, owned and used exclusively by a disabled
6 veteran, or the spouse or unmarried surviving spouse of the
7 veteran, as a home, is exempt. As used in this Section, a
8 disabled veteran means a person who has served in the Armed
9 Forces of the United States and whose disability is of such a
10 nature that the Federal Government has authorized payment for
11 purchase or construction of Specially Adapted Housing as set
12 forth in the United States Code, Title 38, Chapter 21, Section
13 2101.

14 The exemption applies to housing where Federal funds have
15 been used to purchase or construct special adaptations to suit
16 the veteran's disability.

17 The exemption also applies to housing that is specially
18 adapted to suit the veteran's disability, and purchased
19 entirely or in part by the proceeds of a sale, casualty loss
20 reimbursement, or other transfer of a home for which the
21 Federal Government had previously authorized payment for
22 purchase or construction as Specially Adapted Housing.

23 However, the entire proceeds of the sale, casualty loss
24 reimbursement, or other transfer of that housing shall be

1 applied to the acquisition of subsequent specially adapted
2 housing to the extent that the proceeds equal the purchase
3 price of the subsequently acquired housing.

4 For purposes of this Section, "unmarried surviving spouse"
5 means the surviving spouse of the veteran at any time after the
6 death of the veteran during which such surviving spouse is not
7 married.

8 This exemption must be reestablished on an annual basis by
9 certification from the Illinois Department of Veterans'
10 Affairs to the Department, which shall forward a copy of the
11 certification to local assessing officials.

12 A taxpayer who claims an exemption under Section 15-167 may
13 not claim an exemption under this Section.

14 (Source: P.A. 94-310, eff. 7-25-05.)

15 (35 ILCS 200/15-167 new)

16 Sec. 15-167. Disabled veterans standard homestead
17 exemption.

18 (a) An annual homestead exemption, limited to the amounts
19 set forth in subsection (b), is granted for property that is
20 used as a qualified residence by a disabled veteran.

21 (b) The amount of the exemption under this Section is as
22 follows:

23 (1) for veterans with a service-connected disability
24 of 100%, as certified by the United States Department of
25 Veterans Affairs, the annual exemption is \$15,000;

1 (2) for veterans with a service-connected disability
2 of at least 50%, but less than 100%, as certified by the
3 United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the annual
4 exemption is \$5,000; and

5 (3) for veterans with a service-connected disability
6 of at least 20%, but less than 50%, as certified by the
7 United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the annual
8 exemption is \$2,000.

9 (c) The tax exemption under this Section carries over to
10 the benefit of the veteran's surviving spouse as long as the
11 spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead,
12 permanently resides thereon, and does not remarry. If the
13 surviving spouse sells the property, an exemption not to exceed
14 the amount granted from the most recent ad valorem tax roll may
15 be transferred to his or her new residence as long as it is
16 used as his or her primary residence and he or she does not
17 remarry.

18 (d) The exemption under this Section applies for taxable
19 year 2007 and thereafter. A taxpayer who claims an exemption
20 under Section 16-165 may not claim an exemption under this
21 Section.

22 (e) For the purposes of this Section:

23 "Qualified residence" means real property, but less any
24 portion of that property that is used for commercial purposes,
25 with an equalized assessed value of less than \$250,000.
26 Property rented for more than 6 months is presumed to be used

1 for commercial purposes.

2 "Veteran" means an Illinois resident who has served as a
3 member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or
4 State active duty, a member of the Illinois National Guard, or
5 a member of the United States Reserve Forces and who has
6 received an honorable discharge.

7 Section 999. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
8 becoming law.